

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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R 230855Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5344
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 5073

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS PBOR ET SO
SUBJECT: DIRE DAWA SITUATION NORMALIZED FOR MOMENT

REF (A) ADDIS ABABA 5027 (B) ADDIS ABABA 4986

1. ETHIOPIAN MEDIA ARE CLAIMING DECISIVE REPULSE OF SOMALI FORCES DURING HEAVY FIGHTING IN DIRE DAWA AREA AUGUST 16-17. ETHIOPIAN NEWS AGENCY REPORTED ATTACK MOUNTED BY SOMALI TANKS, JET FIGHTERS, HEAVY ARTILLERY, AND REGULAR TROOPS WAS BEATEN BACK BY ETHIOPIAN MILITIA AND REGULAR MILITARY UNITS AS WELL AS AIR FORCE. AMONG "ENEMY" EQUIPMENT CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN CAPTURED WERE ROCKET LAUNCHERS, HEAVY ARTILLERY PIECES, ANTI-TANK ROCKETS, ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS, AND T-55 TANKS EQUIPPED WITH ANTI-AIRCRAFT ROCKETS AND SOPHISTICATED COMMO EQUIPMENT. PRESS AND TV CARRIED EXTENSIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF CAPTURED AND DES-
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TRYOED ARMS. ENA REPORT STATED ATTACK CONCENTRATED ALONG NORTHERN AND EASTERN ZONES OF CITY, ON AIRPORT AND ON ROAD LEADING NORTHEAST TO AIYISHA. REPORT CLAIMED SOMALI CASUALTY FIGURES, OF SOME 500 KILLED AND NEARLY 500 WOUNDED, AS OPPOSED TO 150 LOCAL DEFENSE SQUAD MEMBERS KILLED AND 250-300 WOUNDED ON ETHIOPIAN SIDE. (IN APPARENTLY UNRELATED FIGHT, ENA

REPORTED ANOTHER SOMALI MIG-21 SHOT DOWN
BY ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE IN AUG. 19 AIR BATTLE, BRING-
ING TOTAL TO 18 CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN DOWNED.)

2. RELIABLE SOURCES STATED DIRE DAWA SITUATION HAS
STABILIZED FOR MOMENT, WITH ELECTRIC POWER RESTORED
AND TEXTILE FACTORY OPERATING. (DIRE DAWA FACTORY
PRODUCES 35 PER CENT OF ETHIOPIA'S TEXTILES.) AIRFIELD RE-
PORTEDLY RECEIVED SOME DAMAGE BUT STILL QUIITE USABLE.
AFTER INITIAL CIVILIAN PANIC, DIRE DAWA POPULATION
SOMEWHAT CALMER. ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE SUPERIORITY
ONCE AGAIN APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CRUCIAL FACTOR IN
TURNING BACK ATTACK. WE UNDERSTAND MILITIA PERFORMED
BADLY AND WAS OF LITTLE HELP, BUT THAT NEWLY-TRAINED
FLAME TROOPS DID QUITE WELL.

3. COMMENTS: REPULSE HAS GIVEN ETHIOPIAN FORTUNES
TEMPORARY BOOST. SO LONG AS ETHIOPIANS CONTINUE TO
RETAIN CONTROL OF DIRE DAWA AS STAGING AREA FOR OGADEN
FIGHTING, THEY MAY BE ABLE TO REVERSE TIDE OF BATTLE
OVER LONG TERM, ESPECIALLY IF SOMALIS EXPERIENCE
SAME KIND OF LOGISTICAL DIFFICULTIES IN HOLDING
ISOLATED TOWNS IN OGADEN AS CONFRONTED ETHIOPIANS
AT OUTSET OF WAR.
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